

"I Lived Three Lives"

As son and brother, Robert Oswald is an exceptional man. It is not many who can, with no knowledge of their own, summon the inner resources required to call his brother a Presidential assassin and to blame this on his mother. And, when a book ("Lee") not of his writing but bearing his name appeared, Robert was without reluctance in expressing himself. Then the words came from his own mouth - and they promoted "his" book. (It was written by Myrick and Barbara Land.)

In a December 17, 1967, appearance on Dallas TV Station WFAA, as reported by the Associated Press, "I conclude that Lee alone fired the three shots." The subheading later in the story is simple and explicit, "Blames Mother."

This amateur psychiatry did not originate with Robert. From "his" writing, it began with eminent counsel for the Warren Commission:

... I received a telephone call from Wesley J. Liebeler, an assistant counsel ... He told me he was in an isolated cabin or ski lodge working on one chapter of the Commission's Report. He had reached the point where he wanted to reveal Lee's motives for shooting the President, he said, and that was why he was calling me. "When you want to know something," he said, "you go directly to the man who should know the answer."

Robert "knew" so much about his brother, he didn't know even the size of his family. Almost anyone Lee knew had seen more of him than had Robert. Thus, this Commission and its counsel in charge of the chapter on "conspiracy," when the question of motive perplexed, as well it should, selected Robert as "the man who should know the answer" - when Robert had no way of knowing - and went "directly" to him, by phone. Liebeler was at Newfane, Vermont.

Even Robert was troubled by this, after "the Commission had spent months on its exhaustive investigations."

Liebeler's amateur psychiatry led from the Warren Commission to teaching law at the University of California at Los Angeles. The amateur psychiatry was not his alone. In questioning Robert, Albert Jenner, who then aspired to the presidency of the American Bar Association, "asked me whether I had seen two films - Suddenly and The Manchurian Candidate." When Robert later saw the second film, "it shocked me," as well it might, there being, to his knowledge, no Queen of Diamonds in Lee's past and no skill with the rifle.

Perhaps it is this devotion to amateur psychiatry that leaves voids in the investigation into whether Lee had federal connections of any kind.

Interviewed in New York on publication of his ghost-written book, Robert claimed, in the words of the UPI October 2, 1967, story, "that two days after President Kennedy was killed, Secret Service men suspected the FBI was involved in the assassination." The Secret Service then held the Oswalds in "protective custody."

But, if Robert couldn't give Liebeler Lee's motive, by the time his book was contracted, two and a half years later, he was ready with "additional details of why and how his brother" was the assassin, because, in the words used by AP December 8, 1966, "the public needs more details."

Not the public alone is it that "needs more details," Robert's lofty and non-commercial motive in permitting his name to be put on a book written by ^{others.} ~~Myrick and Barbara Land~~. The official investigation needed them, too.

Investigators, police and lawyers are only too familiar with the problem of details and having to get some from sources of dubious

dependability. But there are some areas, those of least official interest, in which Robert can be the only source, having been Lee's full brother and closest to him in age. He had significant things to say, although they were of no interest to the officials. The question we face is not could Robert know, but how dependable is he in reporting what he knows? Can his word be taken?

I believe that on one significant and officially-ignored element of evidence he reports dependably. But the reader should be able to decide for himself. This again leads to Robert's book.

As did Robert, his publishers, Coward-McCann, Inc., blurbed Lee as "a unique and vital document that sheds new light on the influences that led Lee Harvey Oswald to murder." The full-page ad in the October 2, 1967, issue of the trade paper, Publisher's Weekly, boasts of "Robert's efforts to protect Marina from promoters."

All of Robert's earlier professional experience had been with bricks, not protecting widows of accused assassins from "promoters." He worked in a brickyard. His "protection" took the form of assuring that she'd be milked as thoroughly as a prize cow, with 35 percent plus creamed off the top. Only Jack Ruby could have fared worse. The man who shot Lee, with Lawrence Schiller, who was later to call those doubting the Warren Report "scavengers", acting as his agent, got less than half the take.

If it requires exceptional courage and devotion to high principle to call a brother an assassin and say the blame is the mother's - for pay - if this is true sibling love at its exalted pinnacle, real family pride, the authentic Damon and Pythias bit, Robert's financial involvement with his widowed sister-in-law also was a secret scandal early in the life of the Warren Commission. Of this there was a secret investigation. It is not mentioned in the Report.

The Secret Service took possession of Marina as soon as they could, she, her children and her mother-in-law Marguerite, until the second day after the assassination, having been guests of Life. They spirited the family out of Dallas, to the Inn of the Six Flags, at Arlington. It was managed by James Martin. I tell the entire story in WHITEWASH II: The FBI-SECRET SERVICE COVER-UP, in the chapter, "Scheherezade," basing it on the suppressed evidence I was by that time, the late summer of 1966, able to dredge from the Commission's unused river of evidence in the National Archives.

Held virtually incommunicado, Marina was leaned on heavily. She was not told when her husband was shot, was lied to when she heard of it by accident, and then had to insist on being taken to the hospital, where her husband was already dead. Immediately she was returned to the inn and subjected, despite her anguish and over her objection, to a grilling that exhausted her. With translations from English to Russian and back again, the transcript is 45 pages long. It was when I discovered this transcript that I learned of the early official interest in the mysterious David William Ferrie, later to die under strange circumstances.

Once the Secret Service stopped leaning on her, they became the good guys. The FBI always had been the bad guys to Marina. She blamed them for Lee's loss of each job almost as soon as he got it and for other abuse. She refused to talk to the FBI. It took considerable Secret Service wheedling to break down her reluctance.

Money helped, too.

To put it bluntly, Marina was given a simple choice: Deportation to the Russia she hated or wealth and citizenship in the United States - if she "cooperated." ("... if I wanted to live in this country, I would have to help ...")

She chose fame and fortune.

And here is where Robert's noble ambition, to protect the sister-in-law he hardly knew from the "promoters," became important to the government.

Marina's closest friend, the woman with whom she lived, Mrs. Ruth Paine, spoke Russian. Marina spoke almost no English. She trusted Ruth, and thus had to be separated from her so she could "cooperate," cooperation meaning saying almost anything asked of her to indict her murdered Husband.

When Robert's dedication required instant knowledge, instant knowledge he developed, on the spot.

Robert had never met Ruth or Michael Paine, but he knew all about them the day after the assassination, when he visited Lee in Dallas jail. The brothers spoke by phone, through a heavy glass partition. When Robert asked what would happen to Marina and the kids, Lee said, as Robert reports it, that his friends the Paines would look after them.

"I don't think they're any friends of yours," Robert quotes himself as saying.

~~When~~ ^{Which} is precisely the instant knowledge he needed to "protect" Marina from the "promoters."

After publication of my second book, I found the untold story in a secret Secret Service report. It was filed February 26, 1964, by Leon L. Gopadze, a Russian-speaking agent assigned to the Los Angeles office. He had been rushed to Dallas and was the link with Marina. Agents Mike Howard and Charles E. Kunkel helped. Gopadze's investigation is the Commission's File 486.

When the Secret Service moved Marina et al. into the Inn of the Six Flags, they delivered her to what was to become a package deal. Martin took it and Marina over. She was later to complain before the

Commission and to ask for relief, which she was able to buy for herself by paying off Martin and others.

Investigation of the financial scandal, or Robert's "protection" from "promoters," is phrased with diplomatic subtleties rather than rough investigator's language. The "request" was made by Inspector Thomas J. Kelley (now assistant director in charge of Protective Research, the presidential-protection unit). It included whether Gopadze's questioning of Marina "was ever conducted in the presence of James Martin" who by then had become her "Business Manager" and "to relate any conversations in which he participated as translator, occurring between Marina Oswald, James Martin and Attorney John Thorne, relative to any business transactions."

Gopadze took it chronologically. He first met Martin at the Inn on November 27, five days after the assassination, three after Marina had been sequestered there. "At this time Marina Oswald was being questioned by FBI Special Agents /James Patrick/ Hosty and /Charles T./ Brown." Hosty, later disciplined, was the Dallas "Oswald expert."

On that occasion all Gopadze heard from Martin is that "Martin stated that he was sorry for Marina Oswald and that he was doing everything to make her comfortable at the Inn." The next day there was "thanksgiving dinner given by the Martins at their residence for Marina Oswald."

The day after Thanksgiving Gopadze "translated to Marina Oswald various suggestions made by Robert Oswald and James Martin concerning the request of the Rosehill Cemetery officials for the removal of the body of Lee Oswald from his grave," motivated by "threats received by them concerning the disinterment and destruction of the body of Lee Oswald. Marina Oswald reluctantly agreed to the cremation" (which, it happens, was also devoutly desired by the Commission, none of whose

business it was, as they discussed it in their top-secret executive sessions). She stipulated only that it cost her nothing.

At this time it became "apparent" that "a previous offer had been made by the Martin's (sic) to Marina Oswald to move into their home and become a part of their household."

Marina^a appeared to have some doubts about Martin's bighearted Texas generosity, first sought "assurance that his family liked her, then wished to know how long she might remain with the Martin's (sic) and under what conditions. James Martin stated that she could stay with them as long as she wished, that they wished no compensation from her other than helping around the house ... At the conclusion of the conversation between Marina Oswald, Robert Oswald and James Martin, Robert Oswald told the Reporting Agent /that is, Gopadze/ of his personal dislike of Ruth Paine."

Instant knowledge; instant dislike.

Robert and Marguerite "did not wish Marina to have anything further to do with Ruth Paine. He did not elaborate on his reasons, merely stating that Mrs. Paine was a bad influence on Marina. At this particular time Marina indicated that she would do anything Robert wished her to do and stated that she trusted Robert completely."

This "bad influence" consisted in Ruth's having taken Marina into her home, without charge, arranging for her hospitalization in Dallas while she was delivered of her second child, and having driven all the way to New Orleans for Marina and baby June.

Other reasons for Marina's "trust" and Robert's "dislike" soon became apparent.

November 30 - he recounts it day by day - Gopadze and the entourage were driven from the inn to Martin's residence, 11611 Farrar Street, Dallas.

Marina had gotten Martin's assurance that there was nothing his family desired more than giving free room and board to this poor little poor girl. But when they got to the Martin home, "Mrs. James Martin appeared somewhat perturbed with Marina's presence in the household." Because of the neighbors, Gopadze says. She "suggested changing Marina's appearance, changing her name, etc."

So friendly were the local folk that Martin "was encountering difficulty with the local banks in Delâas in opening a bank account under the name of Marina Oswald."

The poor-little-poor girl had somehow been touched with a magic wand. Within a week of the assassination, money was rolling in.

Martin solved the problem by opening "an account in the name of Marina Martin and would negotiate the donation checks by endorsing them in his name and then depositing the cash in Marina's account." Marina "appeared agreeable at this time."

Gopadze "suggested to Martin that he find a reputable lawyer to transact her legal affairs and a competent financial adviser to assist in her business affairs."

No problem at all for Martin. These experts were waiting in the wings. Meanwhile, Marina "strongly indicated her trust of Mr. Martin in his handling of her affairs."

Grand Prairie Attorney John M. Thorne, known to Martin for some time, "was willing to handle Marina's legal affairs," but not "in any criminal actions." Gopadze assured none were likely.

Thorne came right to the next point:

Mr. Thorn (sic) stated that he could not represent Marina without compensation and also suggested at that time that Mr. James Martin be appointed by Marina as her Business Manager (sic).

Marina "agreed that appropriate contracts should be drawn by Mr. Thorn (sic) for the purpose of binding this agreement. At this time no mention was made relative to the matter of compensation and fees."

In his account, Gopadze intersperses mention of various interrogations of Marina for official purposes. It helps cushion the impact of Robert's "protection" of Marina from those who would exploit her and of her financial good fortune at having been the wife of the accused Presidential assassin, next best thing to owning a gold mine. The apparent oversight on the financial details was remedied two days later, when the contracts were drawn. They

provided for 10% of Marina Oswald's income to go to Mr. Thorn (sic) for attorney's fees; 10% of her income to go to Robert Oswald as her adviser; and 15% to go to Mr. Martin as her Business Manager (sic).

This added five percent to Martin "was to be considered as incidental expenses in connection with finding writers for Marina's stories, etc."

Considering that Harper & Row was to provide Mrs. Priscilla Johnson McMillan to write Marina's book - and by early 1966 had a six-figure investment in what was already, obviously, nonpublishable - this does not seem to have been unfair to Martin. Another remarkable coincidence is that Priscilla Johnson, as a Moscow reporter, had interviewed Lee there on his arrival.

The first "advice" Marina needed and got was not from Robert, who got 10 percent allegedly for this purpose. Gopadze provided it by asking

if the above percentage fees were based on monies received by [Marina Oswald from various contribution and donations from people throughout the United States. Mr. Martin stated that even though the contracts drawn up by Mr. Thorn (sic) seemed to indicate this would be the case, that it could be specifically stated in the contracts that the contracts did not refer to monies received as donations and contributions, and it would be a simple matter to so correct the contracts.

This, as Gopadze said, "was not his duty nor within the sphere of his work to become involved in Marina Oswald's personal affairs," especially when Robert was getting his cut for it. But the government told Marina that if she helped, it would look out for her², and here

it did. It cost Robert and the others a percentage of the generous gifts.

Marina was content to be milked, feeling that if the parties involved could make money for themselves, it would mean money for her, too.

The contracts ran for 10 years. Apparently, she was not told that writers also get paid. What this deal cost her in toto remains unknown.

In all of this, Robert, with his brickyard experience to put at Marina's disposal for a 10 percent cut of her gross, served two purposes: to swing the deal for his partners and the government and to keep Ruth Paine, the one independent person with whom Marina might consult, away from Marina. He succeeded with both, thus earning from his partners Martin and Thorne some of what they might otherwise have kept of what they milked from Marina.

How well he kept Ruth and Marina separated is revealed in this hitherto-unpublished document from the Dallas police files. It is the December 23, 1963, report of Criminal Intelligence Section Lieutenant Jack Revill, meaninglessly entitled, "SUBJECT: CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE (4)"-

The undersigned Officer was assigned, along with two United States Secret Service Agents, at the JAMES HERBERT MARTIN residence, 11611 Farrar, for security purposes on December 21, 1963. Mrs. MARINA OSWALD is presently living at this address. The following report, regarding occurrences during this tour of duty, is submitted for your information.

At 10:40 a.m. Mrs. RUTH PAYNE, aka MRS MICHAEL R. PAYNE, was observed at the front door. Mr. MARTIN was told by Secret Service Agents that Mrs. PAYNE had been informed that she would not be permitted to see Mrs. OSWALD. Mrs. OSWALD went to the back of the house and remained out of sight while Mrs. PAYNE was there. Mr. MARTIN opened the front door and Mrs. PAYNE entered without being invited into the house. She brought some packages which she stated were for the MARTIN children and a package which had come to her address through the mail for Mrs. OSWALD. Mrs. OSWALD'S package was given to Secret Service Agents after she left for examination but the packages for the MARTIN children were not checked. Mrs. PAYNE stated that she wanted to get acquainted with Mr. MARTIN, he reminded her that he had come to her house in Irving and picked up Mrs. OSWALD'S possessions. Mrs. PAYNE said that so many people had been there she did not remember him. Mrs. PAYNE expressed a desire to contact Mrs. OSWALD and was told by MARTIN that she was not having any visitors and that he had been asked not to reveal her whereabouts. Mrs. PAYNE'S actions indicated that she knew or at least suspected, that Mrs. OSWALD was living with the MARTINS. Mrs. PAYNE

left at 12:20 p.m. She drove a 1955 Chevrolet station wagon, color two-tone green, bearing 1963 Texas license number NK 4041 which is registered to her at 2515 West Fifth Street, Irving, Texas.

Mr. MARTIN stated that he thought Mrs. PAYNE had gotten his address from JOE FISHER at the Statler Hotel, she mentioned that she had talked to FISHER.

The Secret Service Agents on duty declined to comment on the relationship between Mr. MARTIN and Mrs. OSWALD or MARTIN's reasons for taking her into his home. They stated that Mrs. OSWALD had been made some offers, the nature of which they would not disclose, that could bring her a substantial amount of money and they implied that MARTIN was supporting her and going to manage her affairs for a percentage. They stated that as far as the Secret Service was concerned MARTIN might as well have the money as anybody else.

This report was written by Detective T. T. Wardlaw, to whom Revill had assigned his "security" job.

Exactly the same thing happened to the American Civil Liberties Union when its Dallas branch worried about Marina's enjoyment of all her legal rights. In that case, the police had their own interest. They, considering the ACLU "subversive," had planted an agent inside it. The Commission, after entering this report into its evidence as Exhibit 710, physically removed it and replaced it with a totally false explanation in the printed volumes (17Hxvii) saying there is no exhibit of this number ("This number was not used"). I was able to get a copy, even after the Archives denied its existence. This lie is no more accidental than it is pointless.

So, Marina was in good hands. She did cooperate in full. She said what was required of her, avoided deportation, and got her citizenship while she grew rich. And, although a witness to nothing, prospered as the chief witness against her husband - and the first. When it later developed that what she had said before this deal was packaged and delivered was contrary to what was wanted of her, before the Commission, she had a simple and readily-accepted explanation: She swore that she had lied while not under oath but would not lie under oath! The Commission

remained untroubled about this until the end of its days. Then, too late, Senator Russell developed some misgivings about her testimony. Without having really participated in the Commission's work, he nonetheless shook her into changing her story again in a secret hearing held in a Dallas military installation on Sunday, September 6, three weeks before the Report appeared, after it had been set in type and without significant impact on it or its predetermined conclusions.

With this history, we may be better able to appraise two bits of information from Robert that bear very much on whether his brother may have been a federal informant, particularly on whether Lee might have begun life with this as an ambition.

These may seem to be contradictory, yet they may not be. When Look condensed "Lee," it chose to eliminate the second, but inconsistency need not be considered the only possible explanation.

Robert says he believes Lee "first became interested in Communism" in 1954, when Lee was in the ninth grade, rather precocious political development. To this he adds, "I can't help wondering whether it might have been Ferrie who introduced Lee to Communist ideas."

David William Ferrie, homosexual former airline pilot, a brilliant psychopath who died mysteriously in New Orleans in early 1967 while under investigation, held such virulently anti-Communist views that conservative organizations found them too extreme to be listened to. Ferrie was deeply involved in CIA-directed and -financed anti-Castro activities. He claimed to have been a contract employee for the CIA. His godson, Morris Brownlee, told me that Ferrie had introduced him to his CIA "contact."

In using "wonder," the Lands put the right word in Robert's mouth. But the wonder is about what kind of political ideas, if any, Ferrie "introduced." Lee was strongly anti-Communist, despite the official misrepresentation.

Oswald's hatred of Russian Communism and American Communists permeates 150 consecutive pages (283-434) of those of his notes reproduced in Volume 16 of the Commission's appended evidence, which almost nobody has ever seen. Rather vigorously, these say the opposite of what is presented in the Report. In his secret writing Oswald had raged:

The Communist party of the United States has betrayed itself! It has turned itself into the traditional lever of a foreign power to overthrow the government of the United States, not in the name of freedom or high ideals, but in servile conformity to the wishes of the Soviet Union ... /the leaders/ have shown themselves to be willing, gullible messengers of the Kremlin's international propaganda ... the Soviets have committed crimes unsurpassed ... imprisonment of their own peoples ... mass exterminations ... individual suppression and regimentation ... deportations ... the murder of history, the prostitution of art and culture. The communist movement in the United States, personalized by the Communist Party, U.S.A., has turned itself into a "valuable gold coin" of the Kremlin. It has failed to denounce the Soviet Government when similar actions of the U.S. Government bring pious protest. (Spelling improved.)

Where Oswald, in private, speaking his real beliefs, described himself as one "with many personal reasons to know and therefore hate and mistrust Communism ..." (16H442), the Commission prated about what it designated as his "dedication" to "Marxism and Communism."

When there was this gruesome official "What's My Line" with evidence, history and the investigation of the "crime of the century," the real Lee Harvey Oswald could not "please stand up," being safely in his grave. In this Report, even his ghost was kept there. If the real Lee Harvey Oswald sounds more like J. Edgar Hoover than Karl Marx, it is surprising only because of the official decision not to trouble the country with the real details of the real life and beliefs of the real Lee Harvey Oswald.

What Look eschewed appears on page 47 of the book:

One of his favorite programs was I Led Three Lives, the story of Herbert Philbrick, the FBI informant who posed as a Communist spy. In the early 1950s, Lee watched that show every week without fail. When I left home to join the Marines, he was still watching the reruns.

Boyhood devotion to a program glorifying the FBI is hardly the usual apprenticeship for Communist belief. No more than trying to join the Marines at 16 and succeeding at 17. If any conclusion were to be drawn from this, and here there is no reason to doubt Robert, it is more likely that from childhood Lee aspired to emulate Philbrick, to become an FBI informant, a not-unrewarding sideline for young men not prepared for life with a good trade or profession.

And, despite the contrary official conclusions and the official effort to hide all relevant evidence, the one consistent direction in much of Oswald's short life beginning with his favorite TV show is that of informant.